GFL
German as a foreign language

Is a Schtoan a Stein? – How and why to teach dialects and regional variations in the German language classroom

Juliane Wuensch, Saratoga Springs, NY

& David Bolter, Bloomington, Indiana

Is a Schtoan a Stein? – How and why to teach dialects and regional variations in the German language classroom

Juliane Wuensch, Saratoga Springs, NY & David Bolter, Bloomington, Indiana

The following article explains the necessity of including regional variants and dialects in the foreign language classroom and also provides a suggestion for a teaching unit which can easily be integrated and adapted in any German language classroom to better prepare students for their study abroad or travel experiences. It hereby draws on the necessity of exposure and explicit instruction for students to be able to not only identify but also comprehend regional variations. The teaching unit builds on a basic understanding of historical linguistics and uses the common core of German and English to explain the Bavarian dialect, as it is spoken in wide areas of Southern Germany and Austria.

1. Introduction

Study abroad is an important part of foreign language education and many institutions encourage their students to participate in programs to enhance their experience and to put their language abilities to use outside the classroom. However, the language taught in the classroom can be significantly different from the language encountered outside of it. Therefore, this article argues that it is essential to expose foreign language learners not only to the standard version of the language, but also regional varieties and dialects. In the following, this article explains the necessity of dialectal inclusion based on the example of the German language and study abroad programs at Indiana University, and also provides a suggestion for a teaching unit which can easily be integrated and adapted for any German language classroom to better prepare students for their study abroad or travel experiences. It draws on the necessity of exposure and explicit instruction (as introduced in Schoomaker-Gates 2017) for students to be able not only to identify but also comprehend regional variations. The teaching unit is built on an introductory understanding of historical linguistics and uses the common core of German and English to explain the Bavarian dialect,[1] as it is spoken in wide areas of Southern Germany and Austria.

---

[1] N.B. that we employ the term *Bavarian* in its dialectological and not in its political sense. Thus, it thereby refers to all eastern varieties of Upper German, spoken in Bavaria proper and much of the nation-state of Austria. We may note that this distinction is clearer in German, as *Bairisch* is employed in the dialectological sense and *Bayerisch* in the political sense.

1.1 What is Standard German? What is a dialect? What are Umgangssprachen?

The German language, like most human languages, has a great deal of regional and societal variation. There are many terms that have been used in the German socio-linguistic tradition to describe this type of linguistic variation, such as Standard German, dialects of German, and German *Umgangssprachen*. Standard German, often referred to as *Hochdeutsch* or *Standarddeutsch*, has been defined in a number of ways. Bubenhofer et al. (2014: 26) have provided a list of nine adjectives that apply to Standard German, including: "geschrieben, normiert, (auch) gesprochen, kodifiziert, überregional, als maß-geblich akzeptiert, durch Medien/Behörden/Institutionen verbreitet, in Schulen unter-richtet, variierbar".[2] In this sense, the Standard German language can be understood as the variety that is unified and codified and spread throughout the German-speaking world via institutions such as school, government and the media. However, a crucial dimension that is missing in these and other definitions of the term Standard German is the national affiliation of this standard variety, especially in light of the fact that German is spoken in more than one country. On this matter, there are two primary theses available in the literature: the *pluricentricity* theory and the *pluri-areal* theory (see de Cilia & Ransmayr 2019: 40-47 for a review). The *pluricentricity* theory (advocated by Ammon 1995, Dollinger 2019, among others) holds that there are multiple forms of Standard German that roughly correspond to the boundaries of the nation-states (at least three: one for Germany, one for Switzerland and one for Austria). The *pluri-areal* theory (Wolf 1994: 74, Scheuringer 1996, Herrgen 2015, among others), which is more common within the German-speaking world than outside of it, argues that the regional forms of Standard German do not correspond to nation-state boundaries. As a general rule, textbooks and learning materials for learning German are geared towards Standard German German (SGG). In the case of Austria, Wiesinger (1996: 154) estimates the lexical differences between SGG and Standard Austrian German (SAG) to amount to about 2%.[3] Thus, the differences between the two may not be large enough for SAG to be considered a separate language, but they are certainly noticeable, especially when the regional varieties and dialects are considered. In this paper, we will assume that there is such a thing as SAG,

---

[2] English translation (by authors unless otherwise noted): "written, standardized, (also) spoken, codified, supraregional, accepted as representative, spread via the media, the authorities and the institutions, taught in school, variable."

[3] See also Elspaß et al. (2013) for more on lexical differences in Standard German between Switzerland, Germany and Austria, including in particular *Fugenelemente*, gender differences and past participle inflection.

which is described in works such as Wiesinger (2009: 229-57) and Moosmüller et al. (2015: 339-48).

One commonly uses the term dialect for the least formal and most regional register of the German language. However, it is important to note from the outset that different linguistic traditions employ the term dialect differently. In particular, the term dialect often differs in its definition in the anglophone vs. the German-speaking world. Anglophone researchers tend to use the term as synonymous with a linguistic variety of any kind. Thus, everyone speaks a dialect in the sense that everyone speaks a variety of a particular language. A representative of such a viewpoint can be found in Chambers & Trudgill (1998: 3), which is common to the anglophone world:

> We will, on the contrary, accept the notion that all speakers are speakers of at least one dialect—that standard English, for example, is just as much a dialect as any other form of English—and that it does not make any kind of sense to suppose that any one dialect is in any way linguistically superior to any other.

In the German-speaking world, the term dialect is usually defined as the form of speech furthest away from the standard language that is associated with a particular region. For example, Schmidt & Herrgen (2011: 59) define *Dialekte* in the following manner: "Dialekte sind die standardfernsten, lokal oder kleinregional verbreiteten Vollvarietäten."[4] Thus, in terms of the latter understanding it is not necessarily the case that everyone speaks a *dialect*, since some speakers use a form of language that is neither the standard nor the form of speech furthest away from the standard language. Instead, they might speak an intermediate form of language.

Therefore, the German definition of the term *dialect* or *Dialekt* necessarily excludes the standard language. Some researchers are slightly more specific and use the term *Basisdialekt* for this variety. For example, Wiesinger (1980: 187-88) defines *Basisdialekt* with the following characteristics:

> Der Basisdialekt ist ländlich stark lokal gebunden und deshalb entwicklungsgeschichtlich der konservativere Dialekt, der von den einheimischen, wenig mobilen, verkehrsmäßig hauptsächlich auf den Wohnort beschränkten Bevölkerung im alltäglichen privaten Gespräch unter Bekannten gesprochen wird und damit eine geringe kommunikative Reichweite besitzt.[5]

---

[4] English Translation: "Dialects are the *full varieties* that are furthest from the standard language and are spread locally or across a small region."

[5] English Translation: "rural, strongly associated with a region and therefore historically conservative, that is used in everyday conversation by the local population, which is least mobile and is commercially primarily limited to their place of residence, and therefore possesses a limited communicative range."

In this way, it can be seen that the term dialect, as it is used in the German-speaking world, is more specific in its definition, used for a variety that is as distinct from the standard language as possible.

Yet, the two poles of dialect and standard language only represent a small selection of the full scale of variation found in the German-speaking world. In between these two poles, one finds many varieties of German, which are often referred to as *Regionalsprachen*, *Umgangssprachen* etc. For example, one may consider the graphic, adapted from Spiekermann (2007: 120), in Figure 1.

Standard	Nationale Standards	Regionale Standards	Regionalsprachen	Dialekte
		rst_1	r_1	D_1
	nst_1		r_2	D_2
		rst_2	r_3	D_3
St	nst_2		r_4	D_4
		rst_3	r_5	D_5
	nst_3		…	D_6
		rst_4		…

Figure 1: The scale of language variation in Southern Germany and Austria

This model, which is referred to as the *Diaglossie* model, models the continuum of language variation for many areas of the German-speaking world. In particular, this model obtains for much of central and southern Germany as well as Austria. This model also demonstrates that the number of variants becomes smaller as one moves from right-to-left on the scale. Thus, while there is a large number of *Dialekte*, there are fewer *Regionalsprachen* and still fewer *regionale Standards* (cf. Spiekermann 2007: 120). Note here that Spiekermann tacitly agrees with the *pluricentric* approach to Standard German, as evidenced by the fact that he gives *nationale Standards* their own status in the graphic above.

In what follows, we will discuss this variation in more detail and describe why and how this can be incorporated into the foreign-language classroom, with particular reference to the scale of variation as it is found in Graz and the surrounding area.

2. Why include regional variations and dialects in the language class?

Teaching German as a foreign language anywhere in the world often means teaching a version of German that is represented by textbooks as standard (see our discussion in Section 1 above). However, the concept of a standard form of German is deceiving for learners, who expect to be able to understand and communicate with native speakers of

German after having learned the language for a certain amount of time. Classroom instruction rarely prepares learners for the realities of language. Depending on the region that language learners visit, they may encounter a form of German that sounds like a completely different language than the one they have learned in class. In a study, Lam & O'Brien (2014) found that the level of language proficiency does not correlate with the ability to understand regional varieties or dialects, although advanced speakers were able to discriminate dialects from one another. While advanced learners are better in recognizing that it is actually a variation and not the standard form of the language, they often still have the same difficulties that a learner beginning German would have in understanding what is being said. The regional variety can seem like a whole new language for them, which is not surprising, given the combination of lexical, grammatical, and phonological differences.

Therefore, any language course that seeks to prepare its students for a real-life experience in a German speaking-country, or with native speakers in general, should include non-standard varieties in its curriculum. However, simple exposure through audio or video is not enough for learners to actually be able to understand regional varieties. As Schoomaker-Gates (2017) highlights, small units of explicit instruction are needed to increase intelligibility, while exposure alone fosters only the recognition of a dialect. In the following, this article proposes a teaching unit on how to integrate Bavarian, a dialect spoken in large parts of Southern Germany and Austria (cf. Figure 2) into the German language curriculum. Because of its distinctive phonological and lexical differences from Standard German on the one hand, and the popularity of the geographical region for international travelers on the other hand, Bavarian is an excellent example of a variety that German language students might encounter and have difficulties with.[6]

---

[6] According to online language database Ethnologue (Eberhard et al. 2020), there are approximately 14,359,000 speakers of Bavarian German. The large size of the Bavarian-speaking world further speaks to its relevance in the German language classroom.
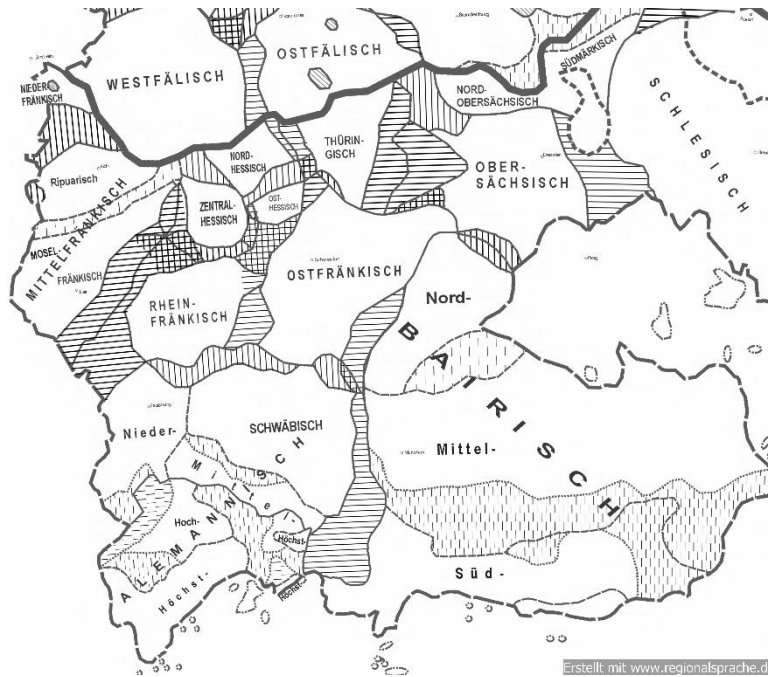
Figure 2: The dialect regions of the German-speaking world (cf. Wiesinger 1983)

At Indiana University, similar to many other universities and teaching institutions all over the world, the German department (often in conjunction with other affiliated programs and departments) offers and supports study abroad programs to enhance not only the language abilities and cultural experiences of its students, but also to increase their chances on the job market through international exposure. Two of these programs, one for High School students and another one for undergraduates, send students to Graz, Austria. Both offer a fully immersive experience, as students stay with host families and are encouraged to speak only German for the whole duration of their stay. However, the success of the language immersion is often complicated by the regional dialect that is spoken in the area. Frequently, even advanced German learners have difficulties fully participating in activities with their host families. While many speakers of German primarily use Standard German, approximately 43.2% (Stickel & Volz 1999: 11) of native German speakers report that they can speak a dialect to some degree. In Austria, specifically, 51.2% of teachers report that they frequently encounter dialect from their students, whereas an even larger 84.7% report that they frequently encounter *Umgangssprache* (cf. Figure 80 in de Cilia & Ransmayr 2019: 200). Experience further demonstrates that dialect speakers may be more likely to use the regional variety in certain settings, for example at home or around family. Participants in these study abroad programs from Indiana University, who have only been trained in understanding Standard German, report that they often feel left out or frustrated in these instances. Even though

teachers explain to the students in short orientation workshops beforehand that they will probably encounter speakers of regional varieties, students do not receive explicit instructions that would help their comprehension ability. Consequently, it often falls on the individual learners and their host families to find strategies to overcome any difficulties resulting from these situations. The next part of this article highlights the differences between Standard German and the variety spoken not only in Graz, but also in wide areas of Southern Germany and Austria.

3. Vocalic differences between Standard German and Southern Styrian dialect

The standard form of the German language, often known as *Hochdeutsch* (High German), is historically based on the forms of the spoken German in the Central Eastern regions of the German-speaking world, with Martin Luther's 16th century bible translation occupying a key point in the development of the modern standard language. In general, scholars recognize four periods of the German language: Old High German (OHG) from the earliest writings and inscriptions until the year 1050, Middle High German (MHG) from approximately 1050 until 1350, Early New High German (ENHG) from 1350 to 1650 and New High German (NHG) from 1650 until the present day. In what follows, we will refer to the last of these four stages as Modern Standard German (MSG), in order to emphasize its role as a standardized and to a certain extent "artificial" language. The changes that have occurred between the four stages are numerous and have affected all areas of the language. One significant change between MHG and MSG involves the vowel system. In MHG, many words had the vowel *î*, a long i-sound transcribed as [iː][7] and similar to the vowel sound in the English word *heat*. In addition to these words with [iː], there were many other words with *ei*, pronounced as a diphthong, [eɪ̯], like in the English word *hate*. Over the course of time from MHG to MSG, these two vowels merged together and are now pronounced as [aɪ̯] and written as <ei> or less commonly <ai>. This is summarized in (1).

---

[7]   Here and throughout, we follow the convention of using <…> to indicate orthographic representation and […] to indicate phonetic transcription. When words from MHG or Standard German are cited throughout the text, we employ italics to distinguish them from the body of the text. English glosses are provided as '…'. In phonology, an additional distinction is drawn between /…/ for underlying representation and […] for phonetic form. Since we are not making any claims about the phonological structure of Bavarian/ Styrian, we will not employ /…/ and instead only use […].

(1) MHG *ei* vs. *î* vs. MSG <ei>, <ai> [aɪ̯]

ei [eɪ̯]		*î* [iː]
weiz 'I know'	≠	*wîz* 'white'
leip 'loaf'	≠	*lîp* 'life, body'
seite 'rope, cord'	≠	*sîte* 'side'
<ei>, <ai> [aɪ̯]		
weiß 'I know' = *weiß* 'white'		
Laib 'loaf' = *Leib* 'body'		
Saite '(instrument) string' = *Seite* 'side'		

Thus, as we can see in the graphic in (1), showing the development from MHG to MSG, the vocalic system has simplified in that two historically different vowels have come to be pronounced identically. This usually results in an orthographic merger as well, where words of either source are written as <ei>. In some cases, homographs (i.e. two or more words with the same orthographic form) are avoided e.g. *Laib* vs. *Leib* or *Saite* vs. *Seite*, but the pronunciation is nevertheless identical. Such historical mergers are quite common in human languages and the exact details of this merger need not concern us here (cf. Merkle 2004: 11-12 for more on the lack of the merger in Bavarian). However, what is significant is the fact that this merger, though present in MSG, has not occurred in many dialects or regional varieties of the German language. In Bavarian German, for instance, MHG *ei* and *î* remain distinct, where *ei* has become [ɔɐ̯] and *î* has become [aɛ̯], a diphthong that differs slightly from the typical standard German realization. This is summarized in the graphic below in (2). For present purposes, we transcribe only the vowels.

(2) Bavarian German [ɔɐ̯] vs. [aɛ̯]

[ɔɐ̯]		[aɛ̯]
w[ɔɐ̯]s 'I know'	≠	w[aɛ̯]s 'white'
l[ɔɐ̯]p 'loaf'	≠	l[aɛ̯]p 'life, body'

The graphic in (2) represents the broad strokes of Bavarian German, as the [ɔɐ̯] vowel is usual in most varieties of Bavarian, although there are some exceptions e.g. [aː] in Viennese German and Carinthian German (cf. Kranzmayer 1956: Map 16).

Yet, as we defined in the introduction, the *Basisdialekt* is but one aspect of dialectal variation that a foreign student will encounter in Austria.[8] Other forms of language such as the Austrian form of Standard German and the various forms of regiolect will no doubt also be encountered in a study abroad setting. With this in mind, we may consider the various levels that define the scale of language forms in the city and surrounding area of Graz. This is represented graphically in (3). Please note the transcriptions listed are intended to be representative of all words historically inherited from the two different MHG sources.

(3) Levels of linguistic variation in Graz

	MHG *ei*		MHG *î*
	(*ich*) *weiß* 'I know'		*weiß* 'white'
Level 1: Standard German	[vae̯s]	=	[vae̯s]
Level 2: Standard Austrian German	[vae̯s]	=	[vae̯s]
Level 3: Graz city	[vaːs]	≠	[vae̯s]
Level 4: Graz rural	[vɔɐ̯s]	≠	[vae̯s]

In (3), we have given approximations of the various levels of language as spoken in Graz. We note that these are not the only forms one might encounter, but they represent touchstones upon which we may orient ourselves for the purposes of presenting this information to students.[9] It is our anticipation that students will be familiar with level 1 from classroom German instruction, but that they will be less familiar with levels 2 through 4. In understanding the various levels of variation, we may consider level 2 to represent the form of Standard German as it is spoken in Austria. For our purposes, we may say that it differs relatively little from Standard German as spoken in Germany, since

---

[8] Indeed, one could argue that the *Basisdialekt* might be one of the forms of language that a student is least likely to encounter.

[9] For instance, Wiesinger (1980:179) notes five levels of variation (one highly "standardized" form plus four local varieties) for the sentence *Heute abend kommt mein Bruder nach Hause* for a particular locality in Lower Austria. We, therefore, do not wish to suggest that we have exhausted all levels of regional speech, but for the phenomenon in question we can define four main varieties.

our example words are still homophonous. The primary difference in this case relates to the exact nature of the diphthong, [ae̯] or perhaps [aɪ̯] in SGG, but [ae̯] in SAG (cf. Moosmüller et al 2015: 344). It is at level 3, the "Graz city" variety, where we begin to see significant and systematic differences in the two word-classes, as it is at this stage, where the two word-classes are no longer homophonous. Finally, level 4 represents the largest departure from Standard German German, in that the forms of (*ich*) *weiß* are realized with a rather exotic diphthong [ɔɐ̯].We have categorized this as "Graz rural", since it mostly represents the form of speech that one finds in the surrounding and more rural areas, as seen in the grammar of Pilz (1938), where one finds [ɔɐ̯] as the regular development of MHG *ei* e.g. [hɔɐ̯s:] *heiß* 'hot', [kɔɐ̯:s] *Geiß* 'goat', [lɔɐ̯:p] *Laib* 'loaf' (cf. Pilz 1938: 84-88, §34). In contrast to that, one finds [ae̯] (transcribed slightly differently in the original source) as the regular development of MHG *î* e.g. [wae̯s:] *weiß* 'white', [tsae̯:t] *Zeit* 'time', [tswae̯:k] *Zweig* 'branch' (cf. Pilz 1938: 69-70, §29).

4. Sample teaching unit to introduce the Bavarian dialect to German language learners

As highlighted above, the language spoken in regions such as Graz can differ significantly from the Standard German that language learners encounter in a classroom setting. In the following, this article presents a sample teaching unit which can be easily integrated into the German curriculum to prevent learners from feeling overwhelmed or alienated when they come into contact with regional varieties. Spiekermann (2007) suggested that German learners should be introduced to language varieties according to their needs, for example, as preparation for study abroad programs, traveling, or guest speakers from a specific region. We emphasize that the phonological examples that are being introduced in the sample teaching unit are representative for the Bavarian dialect and can therefore be useful to learners that travel anywhere in Austria or Southern Germany, not just in Graz. We may note in addition that acquisition of so-called phonologically complex rules such as this one has been shown in the literature to be particularly difficult for dialect acquirers (cf. Chambers 1992, especially sections 2.3-2.4). The unit is designed to be interesting for learners of all German levels and can easily be adapted for other regional varieties.

Even though historical linguistics is often only taught to language learners in specialized, advanced courses, scholars such as Lightfoot (2007) emphasize the benefits of including

information about the historical aspects of language "by means of clarifying opaque structures and concepts" (Lightfoot 2007: 42) in all levels of language classes. Drawing on Lightfoot's suggestion, the following sample teaching unit integrates explicit instruction about the common historical roots of Standard German and Bavarian/ Austrian varieties, which helps students understand and recognize phonological similarities between their native language English and the regional variety e.g. the fact that *stone* and *white* do not assonate in English or Bavarian German, whereas they do in Standard German (see Tables 4 and 5 below). The teaching unit is split into five short activities which build upon each other and follow a progression. No previous knowledge of historical linguistics or language varieties is necessary, however, the students should already be familiar with German sounds, such as [aɪ] (and its variant forms) and have knowledge of a basic set of German vocabulary. Usually, these requirements are met by German language students at the end of their first semester of learning. Therefore, this teaching unit is recommended for learners with a level of A2 and above. The level of the students can determine the instructional language of the teaching unit; however, the set-up and progression of the activities make it possible to use the target language, German, during instruction even for beginning learners. While the historical linguistics part of the unit draws on similarities with English, the sample also includes suggestions for adjustments for non-English speaking learners. In general, the teaching unit is designed to be an introduction to phonological and lexical varieties of German for learners of all language levels and provides enough flexibility to be easily adjusted for any dialect. The five short parts of the unit can be integrated into the normal curriculum, either into five consecutive lessons or as one longer workshop. However, it is strongly recommended that the order of the five parts remains the same to ensure the progression from passive introduction to active production of regional varieties, which are thus treated similarly to any foreign language that is being taught in a traditional classroom setting.

Step 1: Passive Introduction: Listening Comprehension

First, the students are exposed to the sound of regional varieties through media, such as songs, short video clips, excerpts from a movie, or audio recordings of a dialect speaker. It is up to the instructor to find an appropriate audio clip for the variety that is being introduced. For the Grazer dialect, which is used as an example for this article, Betty O, a popular singer from the area, can be used (see the Appendix for suggestions of classroom material resources). Students should first only be prompted to listen and to

determine if and what they are able to comprehend. The teacher can play the audio clip multiple times; we would suggest at least twice. Afterwards, words or phrases that the learners were able to make out should be collected on the board. If possible, a short summary of the content of the clip can be given. In a second step, the instructor can provide the transcript, for example the lyrics of the audio file with certain words or parts of words left blank. The learners are then encouraged to listen again and identify the blanks. For the Grazer example used in this article, words with the sound [ɔɐ̯] are left blank. At the end of this exercise, students should be familiar with the sound system of the dialect, especially the occurrence of the specific phoneme [ɔɐ̯] in different words.

Step 2: Explicit Instruction

During the next step, students are introduced to some basic concepts of historical linguistics through explicit instruction, which can be approached in similar terms as the introduction to a new grammar concept. In this step, the instructor should use visualization tools, such as handouts, a power point presentation, or simply the blackboard to explain the concept of language changes throughout history. For our example, it is important to point out the merger of two sounds [eɪ̯] and [iː] from MHG into one sound <ei> [aɪ̯] in MSG. Then, the instructor needs to draw the learners' attention to the fact that this merger did not happen in the Bavarian dialect and that both of these sounds are still different today. At this point, the exercise from step 1 can help illustrate the sound differences between the regional variety and Standard German, and students can begin to speculate what the words with the vowel [ɔɐ̯] would sound like in Standard German. Here, it might also be advisable to inform the students that some urban speakers in Graz may use [aː] instead of [ɔɐ̯], as shown in (3). This suggested teaching unit provides an advantage for learners who are English speakers,[10] as will be explained in the next paragraph. However, all other steps can be used with learners regardless of their knowledge of English.

Although English native speakers are unfamiliar with the sound [ɔɐ̯], they can draw on the fact that the English cognates of words with <ei> [aɪ̯] in Standard German

---

[10]   As a widely spoken world language, English is a good language for this comparison. However, other Germanic languages could also be used. For instance, in Dutch one finds <e(e)> [eː] in *steen* 'stone', *heem* 'home', *breed* 'broad' as opposed to <ij> [ɛɪ̯] in *rijden* 'to ride/drive', *bijten* 'to bite', *ijs* 'ice'. Similarly, in Swedish one finds <e> [eː] in *sten* 'stone', *lev* 'loaf', *bred* 'broad' as opposed to <i> [iː] in *vit* 'white', *bita* 'to bite', *tid* 'time'.

disambiguate the two sources of <ei> [aɪ̯]. That is to say that the English cognates of German words with <ei> [aɪ̯] show which words will appear as <oa> [ɔɐ̯] and which will appear as <ei> [aɪ̯]. Specifically, English cognates with [oʊ̯], written <oa> or <oCe> (where C represents a consonant of any type), will usually correlate with Bavarian <oa> [ɔɐ̯], whereas English cognates with [aɪ̯], written <iCe>, will correlate with Bavarian <ei> [aɛ̯]. The table below in (4) shows words that can be used to illustrate the phonological phenomenon described for our example. At the end of this second step, students have been introduced to basic concepts of historical linguistic and are aware that specific mergers that occurred from MHG to MSG did not occur in regional varieties. Students also know that the set of words with [ɔɐ̯] in Bavarian is predictable when the corresponding English words are given alongside them. We further note that one of the common English spellings for [oʊ̯], namely <oa>, can serve as a "bridge" to improve student comprehension. In the tables below, we have used an orthographic transcription in addition to phonetic transcription to facilitate reader comprehension. Note that Bavarian German does not have a standardized orthography (see Merkle 2004: 8-10 for an orthographic transcription of Bavarian).

(4) List of Bavarian words with [ɔɐ̯] derived from MHG *ei*

MHG source	English	Bavarian/Graz variety	Standard German
ei	loaf	loab [lɔɐ̯:p]	Leib
	stone	schtoan [ʃtɔɐ̯:(n)]	Stein
	goat	goas [kɔɐ̯:s]	Geiß
	oak	oach [ɔɐ̯x:]	Eiche
	home	hoam [hɔɐ̯:m]	Heim
	broad	broat [prɔɐ̯:t]	breit

However, it is important for students to comprehend that not all Standard German words with [aɪ̯] are realized as [ɔɐ̯] in Bavarian. For example, there are numerous words with [aɪ̯] or the similar [aɛ̯] in both varieties. Examples of such words are listed in (5).

(5) List of Bavarian words with [aɪ̯] derived from MHG *î*

MHG source	English	Bavarian/Graz variety	Standard German
î	white	weiß [vaɛ̯s]	weiß
	ride	reiten [raɛ̯:tn]	reiten
	bite	beißen [paɛ̯s:n]	beißen
	ice	eis [aɛ̯:s]	Eis
	tide	zeit [tsaɛ̯:t]	Zeit

For the words in (5), it is important that students recognize that these remain essentially the same in comparison.

Step 3: Playful oral reproduction

As a third step, students are asked to orally produce words with [ɔɐ̯] and use the sound creatively in rhymes to familiarize themselves with the vowel. This exercise is best as an immediate continuation of the previous step, to give learners a feeling of the sound and the words that they were instructed about. Many different ways of approaching this activity exist, but the main goal is that students say the words aloud without having to worry about context. One suggestion is to have the learners stand in a circle (or, depending on the class size, multiple smaller circles) and throw a small, preferably soft item around. The person who throws says one of the words from table (4), which should be visible somewhere in the classroom, for example as a power point slide, and thereby prompts the person who catches the item to say the same word in another form. It is up to the learners if they want to start with the dialectal version, the English word, or the Standard German variant. It is important, however, that all three (or two, without the English) are produced one after the other. This is a very basic activity that is usually used for beginning language learners, making it ideal as a first attempt at conscious oral production of the dialect. The naming of the three (or two) words in conjunction also helps the learners to familiarize themselves with the sound-pattern – [ɔɐ̯] in the regional variety and <ei> [aɪ̯] in standard – so that they are able to recognize it more easily upon hearing. By the end of the activity, the students are able to orally produce specific sounds and words in the regional variety and know the corresponding word and sound in Standard German.

Step 4: Game with lexical variants

The fourth step is somewhat separate from the rest of the unit because it focuses on lexical differences between the standard form and regional varieties and can therefore be used as a standalone exercise or even omitted. So far, this article has only referenced phonological differences because this category is often the most challenging for language learners when they are confronted with a regional variety. However, dialects also use different lexical items than Standard German, which in essence are new vocabulary words that need to be learned (not only by foreign language speakers but by any non-regional speaker). A fun activity to introduce these new words is to play the game memory. The internet provides a good starting point to find lists of words that are unique to certain dialects; for our example of Austrian/Styrian please consult our list of resources in the Appendix. For the game memory, it is easiest to use words that can be identified through a picture, for example one side of the card shows a picture of a bookshelf, while the other side has the written word *Regal* on it. There should be two cards for each noun, both having the picture on one side, while one has the Standard German form and the other one the dialectal form. Before the game, the instructor can show a complete set of cards to the students and explain the concept that the dialect uses different words. Then, the students play in groups of two or more and lay out all cards with the picture side facing down. Next, they try to match the Standard form with the dialect word and check if it is correct by turning over the card and seeing the same picture. Wrong guesses are put back in the game and correct matches count as a point for the student and are taken out. The team with the most points at the end is the winner. By the end of this activity, the students should not only have had fun with the game, but also familiarized themselves with words that are different in Standard German and the Bavarian dialect.

Step 5: Active production and playful usage

The last step of the teaching unit consists of students using the lexical and phonological variants creatively in short texts that are presented at the end to the whole class. Depending on the German language level of the students, the texts can be self-produced in partner or group work or the instructor can pre-select texts that students will work with. The idea is that students have a text in Standard German in which they exchange specific words with words from the dialect in a 'Mad-Libs'-style activity. More advanced German learners can write their own text, for example a dialog, poem, or a short story, in which they have to include three (or more) randomly selected dialectal words. The main

incentive of this activity is to have fun with both versions of the German language and to use the regional variations that they have learned creatively in texts. Each learner group can present their creative product in class, which can also function as an oral or written assessment (however, assessment should not be the focus of this teaching unit). Overall, the five parts of the teaching unit are designed to introduce, expose, and instruct German language learners about regional varieties of German and to provide opportunities for them to playfully use and produce the variations.

5. Conclusion

In Europe, most languages have a standard variety that is taught in schools and used as the primary means of communication in television, politics and other realms of society. In spite of this, the languages of Europe have considerable regional and societal variation. Since standard languages are associated with education and are codified whereas dialects are not, many speakers often have the belief that it is the standard language that has grammar and that non-standard varieties are inconsistent or irregular. However, dialects and non-standard varieties in fact do have grammatical rules and regularities. Furthermore, it is often the case that dialects and non-standard varieties retain historical features of the language better than the standard language.

In this paper, we have demonstrated that historical linguistics is intimately connected to present-day dialect variation and that knowing this can be beneficial for students traveling to areas with distinctive dialects, provided that this information is given to students in processible chunks. Not all dialect speakers speak the same way in all contexts and a spectrum of variation exists with which students should be familiar prior to departing for the target country. In order to impart this information, we suggest a five-part sequence of small teaching units that can be summarized in the following manner: exposure, explicit instruction, playful reproduction, recognition game and, finally, active production. We suggest this progression, since these units build on one another and culminate in the students actively producing forms in the target variety. We note, of course, that we have devised our proposed units for American students traveling to Austria, but that our proposed succession of lessons could be employed equally well for students of all backgrounds. Indeed, historical mergers that have remained distinct in regional varieties can be exploited for a wide array of languages worldwide. Some examples of historical mergers that could be taught with regional varieties of American English include the

whine-wine merger (still distinguished by some Southern speakers), *hoarse-horse* merger (still distinct for some Southern and Midwestern speakers), *dew-do* merger (still distinct for some Southern speakers) or *marry-merry-Mary* mergers (still distinct for some speakers across the eastern seaboard). For further description, one may consult Labov et al. (2006: 49-57).

We further suggest that a modified form of our approach could even be employed within Austria in order to facilitate the transition from regional dialects/*Umgangssprachen* toward Standard German. De Cilia & Ransmayr (2019: 228-32) and Dollinger (2019: 108) suggest that German-language pedagogy in Austria suffers from a lack of attention to the *pluricentric* nature of Standard German. Our lesson plan (here particularly Step 2) exposes students to the fact that Austrian dialects have rules as intricate as Standard German, in addition to being more in tune with the historical facts of German and Germanic languages. Such a series of activities could be used to increase the overall linguistic confidence of young Austrian students. Similarly, a program known as Academic English Mastery Program (as profiled for American TV in Cran et al. 2005), in which young students are effectively taught to translate between African-American Vernacular English and Standard English, has been running successfully to the present day (cf Maddahian & Sandamela (2000) and Los Angeles Unified School District website).

In this way, we believe our teaching unit can be successfully employed in a variety of contexts to help improve the linguistic diversity of the foreign language classroom.

Bibliography

Ammon, Ulrich (1995) *Die deutsche Sprache in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz: Das Problem der nationalen Varietäten*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Besch, Werner (1982) *Dialektologie: Ein Handbuch zur Deutschen und allgemeinen Dialektforschung.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Bubenhofer, Noah; Konopka, Marek; Schneider, Roman (2014) *Präliminarien einer Korpusgrammatik*. Korpuslinguistik und interdisziplinäre Perspektiven auf Sprache 4. Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto.

Chambers, Jack K. (1992) Dialect acquisition. *Language* 68/4, 673-705.

Chambers, Jack K.; Trudgill, Peter (1998) *Dialectology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

de Cillia, Rudolf; Ransmayr, Jutta (2019) *Österreichisches Deutsch macht Schule: Bildung und Deutschunterricht im Spannungsfeld von sprachlicher Variation und Norm*. Wien: Böhlau Verlag.

Cran, William; Buchanan, Christopher; MacNeil, Robert (2005) *Do you speak American?* Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities & Sciences.

Dollinger, Stefan (2019) Debunking "pluri-areality": On the pluricentric perspective of national varieties. *Journal of Linguistic Geography, 7/2*, 98-112.

Eberhard, David M.; Simons, Gary F.; Fennig, Charles D. (eds) (2020) *Ethnologue: Languages of the World.* Twenty-third edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. http://www.ethnologue.com

Elspaß, Stefan; Engel, Julia; Niehaus, Konstantin (2013) Areale Variation in der Grammatik des Standarddeutschen–Problem oder Aufgabe? *German as a Foreign Language* 2, 44-64. www.gfl-journal.de.

Göschel, Joachim; Ivić, Pavle; Kehr, Kurt (eds.) (1980) *Dialekt und Dialektologie*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag.

Herrgen, Joachim (2015) Entnationalisierung des Standards. Eine perzeptions-linguistische Untersuchung zur deutschen Standardsprache in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz. In: Manfred Glauninger; Alexandra Lenz (Hrsg.) *Standarddeutsch im 21. Jahrhundert: Theoretische und empirische Ansätze mit Fokus auf Österreich*. Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 139-64.

Kranzmayer, Eberhard (1956) *Historische Lautgeographie des gesamtbairischen Dialektraumes*. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissen-schaften.

Labov, William; Ash, Sharon; Boberg, Charles (2006) *The Atlas of North American English: Phonetics, Phonology, and Sound Change: a Multimedia Reference Tool.* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Lam, Henry; O'Brien, Mary G. (2014) Perceptual dialectology in second language learners of German. *Elsevier* 46, 151-62.

Lightfoot, Douglas (2007) Language History for Teaching and Learning German. *Die Unterrichtspraxis / Teaching German* 40.1, 34-45.

Los Angeles Unified School District (n.d.). *The Academic English Mastery Program.* https://achieve.lausd.net/AEMP.

Maddahian, Ebrahim; Sandamela, Ambition P. (2000) *Academic English Mastery Program: 1998-99 Evaluation Report.* https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED440538.pdf.

Merkle, Ludwig (2004) *Bairische Grammatik*. Munich: Allitera Verlag.

Moosmüller, Sylvia; Schmid, Carolin; Brandstätter, Julia (2015) Standard Austrian German. *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* 45/3, 339-48.

Pilz, Friederike (1938) *Die Mundart des Semriacher Beckens in der Mittelsteier-mark:(Lautgeschichte)*. Unpublished dissertation, Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz.

Scheuringer, Hermann (1996) Das Deutsche als pluriareale Sprache: Ein Beitrag gegen staatlich begrenzte Horizonte in der Diskussion um die deutsche Sprache in Österreich. *Die Unterrichtspraxis / Teaching German* 29/2, 147-53.

Schmidt, Jürgen E.; Herrgen, Joachim (2011) *Sprachdynamik: eine Einführung in die moderne Regionalsprachenforschung*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt.

Schoomaker-Gates, Elena (2017) Regional Variation in the Language Classroom and Beyond: Mapping Learner's Developing Dialectal Competence. *Foreign Language Annals* 50/1, 177-94.

Spiekermann, Helmut (2007) Standardsprache im DaF-Unterricht: Normstandard-nationale Standardvarietäten – regionale Standardvarietäten. *Linguistik online* 32, 119-37.

Stickel, Gerhard; Volz, Norbert (1999) *Meinungen und Einstellungen zur Deutschen Sprache: Ergebnisse einer Bundesweiten Repräsentativerhebung*. IDS Mannheim.

Wiesinger, Peter (1980) „Sprache ", „Dialekt" und „Mundart" als sachliches und terminologisches Problem." In: Joachim Göschel; Pavle Ivić; Kurt Kehr (eds) *Dialekt und Dialektologie*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag.

Wiesinger, Peter (1982) Die Einteilung der deutschen Dialekte. In: Werner Besch (ed.) *Dialektologie: Ein Handbuch Zur Deutschen und Allgemeinen Dialektforschung.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Wiesinger, Peter (1983) Die Einteilung der deutschen Dialekte. In: Werner Besch (Hrsg.) *Dialektologie: Ein Handbuch Zur Deutschen und Allgemeinen Dialektforschung.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Wiesinger, Peter (1996) Das österreichische Deutsch als eine Varietät der deutschen Sprache. *Die Unterrichtspraxis / Teaching German* 29/2, 154-64.

Wiesinger, Peter (2009) Die Standardaussprache in Österreich. *Deutsches Aussprache-wörterbuch*. de Gruyter: Berlin, 229-257.

Wolf, Norbert R. (1994) Österreichisches zum österreichischen Deutsch. *Zeitschrift für Dialektologie und Linguistik* 61, 66–76.

Biographical Information

Juliane Wuensch received her PhD in Germanic Studies at Indiana University in July 2020, where she also worked as Associate Instructor for German. Starting in Fall 2020, she will join Skidmore College, NY, as Visiting Assistant Professor for German. Before coming to IU in 2013, she worked as a German language teacher in San Salvador, Wisconsin, London, and Leipzig. Her professional interests include language pedagogy, curriculum development, and the influence of identity on the individual learning experience. Email address: jwuensch@skidmore.edu.

David Bolter is a PhD candidate in Germanic Linguistics and Philology at Indiana University in Bloomington. His primary research interests include Phonetics/Phonology and Historical Linguistics and his dissertation investigates the motivation for l-rounding in Austrian dialect. In addition to his research interests, David has served as an Associate Instructor in German and Dutch at Indiana University since 2013. Email address: djbolter@indiana.edu.

Keywords

Foreign language teaching, study abroad, dialects, historical linguistics

Appendix: Sources for Austrian/Styrian vocabulary for classroom use

Online sources:
https://www.ostarrichi.org

Music:
Betty O „Da Seppl" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVc5LFK7Bds&t=43s

Print sources:

Ebner, Jakob (1998) *Wie sagt man in Österreich? Wörterbuch des österreichischen Deutsch.* 3. Aufl. Mannheim: Dudenverlag.

Krasa, Daniel; Mayrhofer, Lukas (2016) *Reise Know-How Sprachführer Österreichisch - das Deutsch des Alpenlandes*. Bielefeld: Reise Know-How Verlag Peter Rump.

Penz, Christian; Lobnik, Alfred (2014) *Leck fett'n: So keppln die Steirer; Wortschatz der steirischen Mundart*. Graz: Ed. Kleine Zeitung.